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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings of a study of the theoretical and practical methods of access to continuing vocational training. It summarizes six reports that compare the following: the construction sector in Spain, France, Italy, and Luxembourg; the banking, insurance, commerce, and administration sectors in Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom; and the electricity and electronics sector in Belgium, Denmark, Greece, and Portugal. Part I uses a common approach to examine practices in each sector. Section 1 provides an overview of general background aspects such as economic features and the national legal framework for continuing training. Section 2 examines organization of continuing training: agreements between the social partners, initial training of employees, and role played by partners in the organization of continuing training. Section 3 examines continuing training practices, separating access to training from its actual conduct, validation, and links with careers. Part II draws conclusions and determines whether any sectoral practices actually exist. It reports that the construction sector seems fairly well organized; the banking and insurance sector has a well-structured training system; but continuing training seems less structured in the electricity and electronics sector. It also delineates the methodological limits of the approach and lays the foundations for a new framework for analyzing access to continuing vocational training. (YLB)

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Access to vocational training in three sectors of the European economy

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panorama

Access to vocational training in three sectors of the European economy

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Since its inception, the Social Dialogue Education-Training Group has concentrated on key aspects of vocational training policy which it considers to be of crucial importance in tackling the social changes brought about by the construction of the Community.

The tangible results of the Group's discussions have included joint opinions and statements which reflect the converging positions and interests of the parties concerned.

The themes of some joint opinions have offered CEDEFOP an opportunity for reflection, questioning and, where necessary, specific assistance. The Work Programme now includes the new field of "Vocational training and social partners".

On 20 December 1991, in document SEC (91) 2531, the Commission published the joint opinion on "Methods likely to provide the widest possible genuine access to training". The Centre established a modest research project to look at this issue after hearing the questions raised by the social partners during the various stages of formulation of this opinion.

Using a sectoral approach, it commissioned comparative analyses of:

- construction: comparisons of France/Italy; Spain/Grand Duchy of Luxembourg;
- electrical engineering/electronics: comparisons of Portugal/Denmark; Belgium/Greece;
- office work-administration-commerce-insurance: comparisons of Germany/Netherlands; United Kingdom/Ireland.

The following document illustrates the findings of these comparisons.

Envisaging the question of access to continuing training makes it necessary to raise

many questions about initial training, the state of the labour market and public policies and funding.

Similarly, using a particular sector to look at the problem of access to continuing training, while making it possible to channel information, does not mean that this information is limited to the individual problems of the sector. The latter is organized in a significant national, and in particular legislative, context.

The studies envisaged by the Centre in 1991 were of an exploratory type. What outcome can be expected from a comparison of an issue as complex as access to continuing vocational training in the various Member States? How can experimentation in enterprise common to a number of Member States be organized? How can the terms of reference of a comparative study in enterprise be formulated so that the findings are meaningful?

While recognizing the feasibility of the work undertaken, the Centre feels that it is worthwhile to disseminate a synopsis of the works relating to the three sectors and involving the twelve Member States. This synopsis is available free of charge as part of the "panorama" series.

Project Officer:
Maria Pierret

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Following on from the work of the "Education-Training" Group, the social partners in the Social Dialogue issued a Joint Opinion in January 1991 on "methods for the broadest possible access to training"[1], setting out three main concerns:

- reducing the gap between the demand for qualified labour and the qualification level of people available on the labour market;
- removing obstacles to participation in continuing training such as illiteracy, lack of initial qualifications and deskilled, temporary and/or part-time jobs;
- bringing continuing training into line with people's interests through its quality, flexibility and financing.

As part of the preparatory work for this Opinion, CEDEFOP organized a study of the theoretical and practical methods of access to continuing vocational training in three occupational sectors: construction, electricity/electronics, office/administration.

Six reports, specific to sectors and countries, were drawn up at that time. The banking, insurance, commerce and administration sectors were studied in Germany and the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The construction sector was studied in Spain and Luxembourg and in France and Italy. The electricity and electronics sector was studied in Belgium and Greece and in Denmark and Portugal.

This document summarizes these reports. Part I looks at each of these sectors and Part II examines methods of comparing practices.

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1 SEC(91) 2531, 20 December 1991, Commission of the European Communities.

PART I

SUMMARY OF CONTINUING TRAINING PRACTICES

In order to facilitate reading and comparison, practices in each of the various sectors are examined using a common approach. The first section provides an overview of general background aspects such as the economic features of the sector and the national legal framework for continuing training. This is followed by an examination of the ways in which continuing training is organized in the sector, looking at agreements between the social partners, the initial training of employees in the sector and the role played by the various partners in the organization of continuing training. The third section examines continuing training practices, separating access to training from its actual conduct, validation and its links with professional careers.

The construction sector is examined first, followed by banks, insurance, commerce and administration and finally electricity and electronics.

I. The construction sector in Spain, France, Italy and Luxembourg

I.1. Economic and legal context

I.1.1. Economic features of the sector

Construction is a sector which is subject to very marked short-term variations and whose activity depends heavily on public policy, especially as regards housing and major works.

Over the last fifteen years the sector has developed in more or less the same way in Spain, France and Italy. In all three of these countries, there was a serious recession during the ten-year period 1975-1985 and it was only in the second half of the 1980s that there was new growth in the sector, although this went together with a skill deficit. This was true of France, but particularly of Spain where unemployment in the construction sector was substantially lower than in other sectors at the beginning of the 1990s.

In Italy, productivity improvements have meant that the sector's recovery has had only a small impact on employment levels.

In Luxembourg, constant growth in the construction sector seems to be main feature of the period 1970-1990, running counter to the variations in the other three countries. Employment continued to rise over this period.

From a structural point of view, it should be borne in mind that this sector is made up largely of small enterprises whose workforce often has a low initial skill level, particularly in carcase work.

Most countries have called upon immigrant labour, for instance France at the beginning of the 1970s or Luxembourg more recently. A feature of the Luxembourg labour market is its intensive use of foreign, especially Portuguese, labour for carcase work and civil engineering. Similar practices can be seen in Italy where African labour started to be used at the end of the 1980s. In Spain, the sector has in contrast called upon the reservoir of rural labour.

I.1.2 National legal framework

A first aspect is obviously whether or not there is a law on continuing training providing a reference framework with which the sectors of activity can be compared.

Although all the four countries studied have national legislation dealing with continuing vocational training, situations are very different.

Luxembourg seems to be at one extreme since continuing training is not regulated in a precise way and is mentioned only in a 1990 law reforming secondary technical education and continuing vocational training. There are regulations, however, setting out rights to training and training leave, the contributions of employees, employers and the authorities to the funding of continuing training and regulating its validation.

France seems to be at the other extreme, since a law dating back to 1971, updated in 1991, based on an agreement between the social partners, makes it compulsory for enterprises to contribute to continuing training (1.5% of the

wagebill of enterprises with more than nine employees from 1 January 1993) and sets out a right to individual training through individual training leave.

Spain and Italy are somewhere between these two extremes, since Spain levies a compulsory contribution for continuing training but has no law governing the right to individual training, while the opposite is true of Italy.

In Spain, it is compulsory for enterprises and workers to contribute to the funding of vocational training (contribution levels are 1% and 0.1% of the wagebill respectively). The 1980 law on workers' status recognizes the right to advancement and vocational training at work. Under this right, it is possible to obtain leave to sit examinations or to arrange for changes to the working day so that vocational training courses can be attended. The law also states that the concrete provisions governing the right to training should be specified in collective agreements.

Italy has no law establishing a compulsory contribution to continuing training for all sectors. A 1973 law recognizes, however, the right to study during working time. All workers are entitled to leave of a maximum of 150 hours, provided that they attend training of a duration which is at least double the credit hours requested. In general, however, continuing training is not dealt with separately in regulations governing vocational training.

I.2. Organization of continuing training in the sector

I.2.1. Agreements between the social partners

In France and Italy, the construction sector seems to be comparatively novel from the point of view of continuing vocational training. Developments are underway in Spain, while in Luxembourg the construction agreement at present contains only one article mentioning the social partners' commitment to promote a vocational training system.

France has many regulations governing the operation of continuing vocational training in the construction sector. A joint body is also responsible for promoting and coordinating continuing training policy in the sector.

Texts signed recently by the social partners recommend that enterprises take account of the knowledge acquired by their employees by allocating them to tasks where they can put their expertise and skills into practice. They also state that continuing training should be given as a priority to employees in enterprise in order to provide basic qualifications for those who do not possess them, to upgrade skills and to prepare for higher qualifications and diplomas at all levels.

Since the war, the collective agreement for the construction sector in Italy has contained a specific article regulating vocational training. This agreement organizes both the training system and training schemes.

The training system is at present of a joint type with a central national organization, FORMEDIL, and its regional representatives. The latter in particular manage vocational schools in the sector. The system is financed by

a wage-based contribution from enterprise which varies between 0.2% and 1% of the wagebill depending on the region. Only the construction and printing sectors have established a compulsory levy on enterprise for training purposes.

There is, however, an important difference between the French and Italian systems. In France, enterprises must spend a minimum amount on training; they are free, however, to choose the type of training and the training agency. In Italy, they pay a levy to the sector's training agency whether or not the training which it organizes suits them.

In Spain, the sector has only recently started to organize continuing training. The collective agreement for construction was signed by the social partners in 1992. It makes provision for the establishment of a joint sectoral council for vocational training responsible for coordinating training in the sector and for disseminating information on training, drawing up training plans and proposing a new occupational classification. The creation of a joint vocational training agency is also to be discussed.

I.2.2. Initial training

The initial training level of construction employees is generally low. In Spain, for instance, close on 90% of workers in the sector have no more than a certificate of primary education. The situation is not very different in Luxembourg where massive recourse to foreign, untrained workers has been reflected by a progressive and fairly substantial lowering of skill levels in the sector. This training deficit, although on a smaller scale, is also to be found in France since close on half of newcomers to the profession have no specific training.

Although it might be thought, on the basis of the above, that the qualification of the labour force takes place predominantly by on-the-job apprenticeship and work experience, there is a substantial need for skilled personnel and in general there are serious employment problems in this sector in the various countries. These are partly due to the sector's low brand image which does little to encourage young people to make a career in the sector, despite pay levels which are comparatively high. This disenchantment has been reflected in Italy and Luxembourg by a gradual corrosion of the apprenticeship system while in Spain, where dual training has not yet developed, construction specialisms attract only a small number of school leavers and in France the numbers of young people in training do not meet the sector's actual needs.

Different strategies have been set in motion in the various countries to deal with this skill deficit, although policies in this sector now seem to be converging to some extent.

In Spain and Italy, for instance, the sector is attempting to offset the shortage of skilled labour by training young unemployed people in construction trades. Changes have only recently started to appear in Spain since in this country, as in France but with a time lag, the objective of the authorities is clearly to promote the training of employees and in particular workers employed by small and medium-sized enterprise. In Luxembourg, where the labour market has a very high absorption capacity, the deficit in the sector is being offset by the use of foreign labour.

1.2.3. Role of the partners in the organization of continuing vocational training

State intervention in continuing vocational training is much greater in France than in Italy and Luxembourg although the latter seems to be moving in the short term towards a model which is fairly close in some respects to the French model. In comparison with her partners, Spain remains somewhat backward. At present, Spanish legislation continues to place little emphasis on continuing vocational training leaving it up to collective agreements to specify the actual terms of the few rights which the legislation allows.

The role played by the regions in the continuing training system seems to be inversely proportional to the role of the State. Although the regions still, despite the law, play a comparatively small part in France, they play a larger part in Italy where some regions have enacted legislation on continuing vocational training since 1975. Regionalization has had an impact on the way in which training is actually organized in the construction sector, since the system is based on regional professional associations responsible for administering construction schools. It should be noted, however, that this infrastructure has not been set up in all provinces and that in this sector, as in others, there is a clear-cut difference between the regions of the South and the North. The Spanish system is situated somewhere between the French model, which is still centralized, and the Italian model, since the State is gradually transferring its continuing training responsibilities to the autonomous communities, although some regions have not waited for this transfer and have established a continuing training system which is often based on that of the central authorities. In the construction sector, the Asturias region has provided a model for the future organization of continuing

training in the sector throughout Spain, basing this training on training schools supervised directly by employers' and trade union organizations.

In all countries, with the exception of Luxembourg, vocational training is now seen as a joint issue. Its joint nature is explicitly recognized in the collective agreements for the construction industry in both France and Spain. In Spain, this joint approach is much more recent and has not yet come into effect since it was introduced into the general agreement for the sector only in 1992. Until then, union and employers' organizations reserved the right to organize, at their own initiative and without consultation, continuing training schemes whether or not they were funded by the regional and central authorities.

The role of enterprise varies from country to country, although in this case as well there seems to be a movement towards fairly standard sectoral models. In France and Italy construction enterprises pay a compulsory levy towards the funding of continuing training in the sector but, in contrast to Italian enterprise, French enterprise retains the ability to decide how to use the amounts which it pays. In Spain, except in Asturias, and until the joint training agency set out in the recent collective agreement has been established, construction enterprises and employees contribute to the funding of continuing training organized by the public authorities, but their contributions are not channelled wholly back to and are not managed directly by the sector. The role of Spanish enterprise has therefore been somewhat atypical up to now. In the near future, however, the Spanish model should move to some extent towards the Italian model, since enterprises will have to contribute directly to the funding of training schools in the sector and will have to use these schools to cover their training needs.

From the employees' point of view, employees have fairly large initiative under French law which recognizes the right to individual training leave and some high-level training methods. In Luxembourg where there is no such legislation and the sector's collective agreement makes little provision, decisions to attend training are often the outcome of a choice made by workers. In Spain, in contrast, continuing training is generally included in enterprise training plans, although employees and their representatives play little part in formulating these plans.

I.3. Continuing training practices

I.3.1. Access to continuing vocational training

Access to continuing vocational training in these four countries seems more problematic in construction and public works than in most other sectors: access levels are some three times lower than in other sectors according to data for Spain and France. This is due in particular to the large numbers of small enterprises in the construction sector and the large presence of less skilled grades. Specific programmes for these categories can, however, be implemented as is the case in France.

Employees who do not have permanent contracts of employment or who are employed by sub-contractor enterprises also have less chance of access to continuing training. Spanish data is significant in this respect.

Unequal access in Italy may also be linked to the training system itself. Some regions have not yet established a vocational school. These schools do not, moreover, give priority to employees in the sector. Their role has more to do

with social policy, focusing mainly on the initial vocational training of young people and training for the unemployed; there is little in the way of training for employees in the sector and what is available is of short duration. This is particularly true in the South of Italy, where unemployment is greater.

Some measures are now being introduced in these countries in an attempt to reduce inequality of access to training due to the status or size of the enterprise. In France, the recent 1991 law extended the individual training leave scheme to employees on fixed-term contracts and extended the compulsory financial levy for training to enterprises with less than ten employees. In Spain, the National Employment Institute is attempting to increase the number of schemes for the employees of small and medium-sized enterprise. In Italy, some people are advocating a pool of credit hours so that employees from small enterprise can make use of them more readily.

1.3.2. Conduct of training, validation, careers

In general, collective agreements do not establish any link between diplomas and pay. Continuing training schemes do not therefore offer a guarantee of promotion, especially when they are not recognized.

In Italy, some people feel that construction workers' lack of motivation to attend continuing training is due to the lack of certification at the end of training schemes. Enterprises control the grades that they allocate to employees without following a national classification which would establish a link between the level of diplomas acquired through initial (or continuing) training, skill levels and pay levels. The promotion system seems to raise problems, particular as it no longer allows for transition from manual worker

status to intermediate technician status. The lack of career prospects may therefore be an obstacle, not so much to young people's entry into the sector, but to their continued presence in enterprises in the sector.

Similar comments apply to Luxembourg and Spain since collective agreements make no specific reference to access to continuing training and explicit account is not taken of continuing training - or even initial training in the case of Spain - in career progression.

The French case would seem relatively unique in this respect since collective agreements set out minimum pay levels in relation to diplomas. Moreover, the Joint National Councils in the sector are promoting training and in particular alternance training as a way of opening up career prospects and encouraging people to stay in the sector. In the case of skill training schemes which do not lead to a diploma, the Councils are proposing to establish specific certificates which will be included in the collective agreements for the sector.

II. The banking, insurance, commerce and administration sectors in Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

II.1 Legal and economic context

II.1.1. Economic features of the sector

Banking, insurance, commerce and administration are the fields of study in this case. Although these are service activities, they each have specific economic and institutional features. Some sectors such as commerce or insurance, moreover, have a high degree of internal similarity, commerce being characterized by a distinction between small retailers and chains of large stores, and insurance by the differences between insurance and re-insurance and between underwriting and door-to-door sales.

Administration is also a sector which is difficult to pinpoint. In the case of the United Kingdom and Ireland, office employees were considered overall, whatever the sector of activity of their enterprise; in the Netherlands, the report examines private administration while the German study relates only to office employees in a particular sector, that of chemicals.

Leaving aside these differences, these sectors are undergoing identical technical changes, particularly as regards the introduction of computers and automation which can be seen in all four countries.

While these changes have led to changes in qualification structures, it seems that employment in these sectors has not slackened off in recent years and has even grown. Unemployment appears to be particularly low in banks in

Germany and some activities such as commerce in this Germany or secretarial work in United Kingdom are facing recruitment problems.

II.1.2. National legal framework

In Germany and the Netherlands, initial vocational training access and conditions are governed by national legislation, while this procedure applies only indirectly to continuing training.

German initial vocational training is governed by a specific national law (*Berufsbildungsgesetz*) irrespective of sectors. There is no equivalent, however, for continuing vocational training which, from a constitutional point of view, is part of vocational training. When continuing training leads to an officially recognized diploma, it is governed by the law on vocational training. Continuing training is also covered by a number of other regulations including the law on industrial relations (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*) which regulates union participation in enterprise operation and its vocational training policy or the labour market support law (*Arbeitsförderungs-gesetz*) which organizes schemes for young people and the unemployed and redeployment schemes.

Continuing vocational training is also covered in Germany by measures intended to protect against the consequences of rationalization, either in the law on enterprise operation or in ad hoc professional agreements.

There are no such measures in the United Kingdom or Ireland. The only constraint in these two countries, established in 1974, is that employers are obliged to instruct their employees in the precautions to be taken for safety

purposes. None of the four countries studied seem to have a national obligation to contribute to continuing training.

II.2. Organization of continuing vocational training in the sector

II.2.1. Agreements between the social partners

In general, there is no collective agreement for the banking, insurance and commerce sectors and few employers in these sectors have entered into agreements with workers' organizations in respect of continuing training. This does not mean that these enterprises do not have a training policy, but rather that there is little or no tradition of dialogue and cooperation between the social partners. Germany is something of an exception in this case.

In the German banking and insurance sectors, continuing vocational training has come to the fore in agreements relating to rationalization measures. These agreements are intended to help employees to avoid redundancy by obtaining more appropriate qualifications.

While the insurance agreement states that rationalization measures are necessary, it also states that account must be taken of the economic and social consequences of such measures. Rationalization measures are intended to help insurance to remain viable, to increase productivity levels and to guarantee work. Such measures entail the abolition of jobs. Personnel representatives must be informed in good time of any restructuring, change or redundancies so that suitable steps can be taken. If employees are occupying different jobs, they are entitled to occupational redeployment. Measures have to be analysed to ascertain whether or not employers should provide funding.

All measures relating to the duration and content of redeployment schemes must be negotiated by employers and personnel representatives. According to the HBV union, however, the agreement on rationalization measures is having a very limited impact.

Some agreements involve the joint participation of employers and trade unions. A project to improve the occupational prospects of unskilled employees was, for instance, signed by the DGB and HBV trade unions and the Hans Böckler Foundation and the banks. The aim is for bank employers' and trade union representatives jointly to develop a qualification concept in order to provide employers with an active qualification policy. This means proposing skilled jobs and a breakaway from traditional elite training. In the insurance sector, the HBV union is attempting to introduce continuing vocational training which is recognized by the State and is linked to initial training. Employers have some reservations about this proposal as they fear that the payment of workers and the leave from working time that workers will have to be allowed for training will raise problems.

Agreements between employers and trade unions may also cover office workers. The latter benefit from measures relating to the enterprise in which they work, irrespective of the sector to which it belongs. In the chemicals sector, for instance, even if there is no right to continuing training, the latter is an important criterion in pay increases. There are also some enterprise agreements. In the collective agreement of a major enterprise in the sector, regulations on continuing training were adopted at the same time as those relating to the reduction of working hours. The management of the enterprise and union delegates agreed to channel the time gained in this way into training. The enterprise also undertook to bear the costs of this training. Such training is intended to help employees to obtain new knowledge. A

continuing vocational training council has also been set up with regular meetings between management and personnel representatives; the works council is kept informed of objectives, content, training methods, selection and diplomas.

There do not appear to be many occupational agreements in the sectors in question in the Netherlands. Only the banking and insurance sector has entered into a comparatively detailed agreement which states that:

- 3000 young people should be trained every year;
- the training of young people aged up to 23 starts within the framework of apprenticeship;
- all employees taking part in continuing training are entitled to take one day of paid leave per annum;
- if training lasts more than one day, workers must attend 50% of the hours of training in their own time;
- if training lasts more than six days, three days may be taken as paid leave;
- authorized training days are no longer calculated for each enterprise but for each employee;
- in cooperation with the public employment service, the sector has set in motion a scheme to accommodate the long-term unemployed in long-term practical schemes;
- people who complete these practical schemes are then recruited so that they can be trained for specific jobs using continuing training methods.

In the United Kingdom, the main banks and insurance companies have developed continuing training policies, often without negotiation with trade unions. Some major enterprises employing a substantial proportion of office workers have joined together to form a Secretarial Development Project,

although the trade unions have not been consulted. As union representation is particularly low among office workers, they play little part in national decisions about continuing training by employers. While it is true that they are more active at local than at national level, agreements between the social partners are few and far between and have little influence in the United Kingdom.

In Ireland, the situation is fairly similar. There is no national collective agreement or negotiation covering continuing training. Negotiations may, however, take place at enterprise level, as is the case for instance for banks.

II.2.2. Initial training

Vocational training is based on the dual system in Germany and national regulations set out a single curriculum for all apprentices. Various forms of organization co-exist in the Netherlands. Vocational training may take place on a full-time basis in vocational schools or within the apprenticeship system. Initial vocational training is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Responsibility for the apprenticeship system is shared by the government, the social partners and training institutes.

Practical training and theoretical training are separated within apprenticeship in both countries. While apprenticeship ends in Germany with a single diploma, there are several methods in the Netherlands: after two years, the apprentice becomes a specialist; after three years, the apprentice becomes an independent specialist, an entrepreneur or a manager. These differences between the two countries apply to the banking, insurance, commerce and administration sectors. Commerce differs because of the large numbers of

workers with few skills which it accommodates and the promotion opportunities which it offers them.

In the United Kingdom, vocational training is more directly controlled by the employers' professional associations which award diplomas. In the office work sector, training has not been developed and the majority of workers are women with few skills.

II.2.3. Role of the partners in the organization of continuing vocational training

State involvement in continuing training in the sectors in question generally takes the form of measures for the unemployed or redeployment schemes. It also plays a part through public permanent education institutions such as open universities.

In Germany, for instance, the State offers occupational retraining schemes under the labour market support law or through the Employment Office. In the Netherlands, the State acts via a supra-regional body, ECABO, which offers training for the long-term unemployed and via the open university which offers courses in administrative trades. In Ireland, the main public continuing training institution is the Training and Employment Office (FAS); the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training in the hotel, catering and tourism sectors organizes courses for the unemployed and young people in particular.

Public bodies also play an important role in validating qualifications. This is true, for instance, of the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) in

England or the Scottish Vocational Training Council which issue National Certificates and Higher National Certificates in the business sector; people working in the sector study for these on a part-time basis in continuing training or higher education institutions.

The position occupied by the training agencies of employers' associations is a feature of the banking and insurance sector in the four countries: the Banking Academy in Frankfurt, the Savings Bank Academy in Bonn, the Institute for Banking and the Stock Exchange and the Banking School in The Hague, the various London institutions (such as the "Chartered Institute of Bankers" or the "Chartered Insurance Institute") and the Banking Institute in Dublin.

Trade unions play a fairly limited role in the sectors in question. This is undoubtedly due to historical factors such as the existence of training institutions set up originally by employers and economic factors such as the small size of most enterprises in the commercial sector.

In Germany, the law on enterprise operation allows unions, in the context of joint management, to monitor continuing training policy within enterprises. Such procedures are not to be found in all enterprises, however, especially in smaller enterprises. In the Netherlands, the unions have less say than in Germany as regards the implementation of continuing training policy. In the United Kingdom, the unions do not seem to play a very important part in the organization of continuing training in the sectors in question.

II.3. Continuing training practices

II.3.1. Access to continuing vocational training

The banking and insurance sector seems to be relatively active in the area of continuing training; this is reflected by the fairly wide access that employees have to such training. One of the factors that has led to the development of training in all the service professions has been the introduction of computers and new technologies. There are still some problems of unequal access, however, chiefly affecting women and in training schemes organized by enterprise where training leave formulae are rarely to be found.

The impact of computerization is evident from the supply of refresher and retraining courses available in the German banking sector. At the beginning of the 1980s, 75% of employees had attended at least one course. Attendance is regulated in different ways depending on the course. Employees are free to attend short courses, within enterprise, without the agreement of their superiors. In the case of courses organized individually and of personal interest, superiors have to give their agreement.

Banks and insurance companies are also very active in the continuing training area in the Netherlands: 70% of employees have attended a course. Outside these sectors, it seems that training has not developed to any great extent. This is particularly true of small and medium-sized enterprise where only 20 to 30% of employees have attended training schemes. Low participation is generally explained by the fact that many enterprises have little awareness of training.

Many of these training systems are difficult to understand and this complexity makes their access difficult.

In the United Kingdom, 62% of London banking institutions have a training plan, 46% have training budgets and 38% have an in-house training centre.

Continuing training has also been developed in other service-sector activities. This is particularly true of commerce and can be illustrated by the German situation. According to a 1990 survey, participant numbers increased by 45% between 1989 and 1990. The introduction of new technologies, higher-level requirements as regards business management, the growing need for managers and the considerable importance of customer consultancy are all reasons for this. A further reason is that enterprises wish to make the profession more attractive.

Access to continuing training is still beset by some inequalities; these are linked to the profiles of employees and of the enterprises in which they are employed.

Women seem to be more disadvantaged. In the German banking sector, for instance, it is easier for men to attend courses than women, even though women account for 50% of employees; women are not as well placed in the hierarchy and have more problems reconciling work and family. After initial training, women tend to remain at the bottom of the hierarchy. 25% of jobs are part-time and 90% of these jobs are occupied by women, limiting their chances of rising up the hierarchy. For women, courses are often more about information than continuing training. A similar trend can be seen in the German commercial sector. As collective agreements make no provision for a right to continuing training for promotion purposes, everything depends on the

enterprise which chooses which employees to promote. Although women account for the majority of employees in commerce, they are in a minority as far as promotion is concerned.

In the United Kingdom, continuing training tends to be aimed at those who are already the most qualified: men, full-time employees and people at the top of the hierarchy. Training is therefore concentrated on 48% of the workforce while 52% are excluded from it. Office workers and secretaries receive little training and any training which they do receive is of a specific kind and has little to do with career progression.

In the United Kingdom it would seem that training is targeted more on newcomers to enterprise than on existing employees. Most of the training available in the banking sector is for new recruits and not for employees already working in enterprises in the sector. In 1986-87 apprentices received 34 days of training, new recruits 12 days and existing employees 7 days. The same is true of office workers in all sectors of activity; apprentices receive 29 days of training, newly recruited employees 13 days and existing employees 5 days.

The sector in which office employees work may also entail inequalities of access. In Great Britain, for instance, employees in the commercial and financial sectors receive an average of seven days of training in contrast to three to five days for office workers in industry. This contrast is not to be found, however, in Ireland.

Training for office workers also seems better developed in the private than in the public sector in the United Kingdom, while the opposite is true of Ireland.

II.3.2. Conduct of training, validation, careers

As no specific leave is generally available, when training takes place during working hours prior authorization must be obtained from hierarchical superiors. This is particularly true of the banking and insurance sector in Germany. In the German banking system, admission to the long-term courses organized by the regional and federal academies is by a selection test organized by the academies themselves. Most courses take place in the evening or at weekends and if trainees attend them in their own time, authorization from superiors is not needed. Entry to a course at the Savings Bank Academy takes place after selection at branch level. Candidates have to be introduced by their superiors.

Responsibility for training costs depends on the sector and the country. In German insurance, for instance, companies bear the cost of training but trainees must work for them for a minimum of three years after training, otherwise they have to refund the cost. Bearing in mind the time taken up by training, this represents a commitment to the company of four to five years which is a problem for young women. Several financial sector employers in the United Kingdom no longer help their employees to attend training and no longer grant leave or help with costs. Professional diplomas, such as those of the Chartered Institute of Bankers, are needed, however, for promotion. It is increasingly the case that employees have to finance training themselves. Diplomas generally take the form of successive modules which can be studied over a certain period. In contrast to the United Kingdom, surveys of two Irish financial institutions show that they reimburse the training costs of their employees.

Redeployment training in Germany is a major area where everyone's rights and duties are well specified. In German banks, employees are entitled to occupational redeployment schemes if their jobs are threatened by rationalization measures. They are entitled to receive their normal pay while the attend the course. Costs must be paid by the employee if payment by another authority is not possible, for instance under the labour market support law. Training must take place during normal working hours otherwise the employee is entitled to additional leave. If the course takes place outside the enterprise, employees are not obliged to carry out their normal work. These redeployment measures are based on an agreement between employees and employers and the employer must refund costs if the course ends early.

In insurance, in contrast to banks, employers are responsible for redeployment costs while continuing to pay a normal wage. Redeployment cannot be stopped unless there is a mutual agreement. If employees fail to find work, they must be offered new schemes.

Training may also play a role in protecting against redundancy, especially where employees can study within continuing training for diplomas as managers, offering the possibility of a more stable position. This is particularly true of insurance in Germany.

There seems to be no automatic link between continuing training and career pro ression in any of the four countries studied. In Germany, however, in the chemicals industry in general and for office employees in particular, continuing training is an important factor in moving to higher pay levels. Similarly, Irish financial institutions recompense individual initiatives in the area of training.

III. The electricity and electronics sector in Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Portugal

III.1. Economic and legal framework

III.1.1. Economic features of the sector

The electricity and electronics sector has changed in very different ways in Portugal and Denmark.

Increased growth in investment, the dynamism of the domestic market and an opening out to international markets have turned the Portuguese electricity and electronics sector into a dynamic sector which has had a relatively high level of growth since the second half of the 1980s.

In Denmark, in contrast, activity in the sector has grown only slightly in recent years. The introduction of new technologies has helped to curb the creation of jobs in the Danish electricity and electronics industry, whereas in Portugal the low cost of labour has encouraged multinational enterprises to settle there; this has been reflected in recent years by a very substantial growth in the volume of employment in Portugal.

From a structural point of view, the Portuguese electricity and electronics sector is composed chiefly of small and medium-sized enterprises involved mainly with assembly and employing a labour force with few skills. In Denmark, the electricity and electronics industry seems much more organized into expertise exchange networks. The products manufactured in Denmark require expertise and abilities which have to be renewed and updated fairly

frequently, bearing in mind that skills are considered to be obsolete after six years in the electronics industry.

Comparison of these two countries with Belgium and Greece is problematic as few data are available for these countries. In Belgium and Greece the electrical sector is being or is about to be restructured and this may have an impact on current practices of access to continuing training in this sector. Electricity generation, transportation and distribution is more or less in the hands of a public monopoly in Greece and a private monopoly in Belgium.

III.1.2. National legal framework

Of the four countries in question, only Greece still has no law regulating continuing training. There is therefore no legislation making it compulsory for employers to contribute to the funding of this type of training and to facilitate workers' access thereto. In practice, Greek priorities seem to have more to do with the restructuring of initial vocational training schemes than with the development of continuing training as the need for this type of training has only recently been felt. The new needs emerging in this field would tend to suggest, however, that the present legislative vacuum could be filled in the medium term.

Although the other countries have legislation on continuing training, their situations are very different.

In Belgium, for instance, the 1985 law regulates individual continuing training initiatives but does not regulate training practices in enterprise. It establishes training leave whose duration differs depending on whether the training attended is of a general or vocational type, stating that general education is

entirely financed by the State while the funding of vocational training is shared equally between the State and enterprises which are obliged to contribute to a training fund.

Under Danish legislation, it is compulsory for enterprises and employees to contribute to the funding of continuing training. In contrast to Belgium, however, the law makes no provision for training leave. Such leave has to be negotiated between employers and employees and if an agreement is reached, the State may in certain circumstances bear the costs. Since 1992, the practical experience and theoretical knowledge that employees already possess are deducted from the initial duration of training.

The Portuguese situation differs substantially from that of Belgium and Denmark. In the first instance, legislation in this field is much more recent as it was only really in 1991 that a legal framework was provided for continuing training. Although the law sets out the general organization of the continuing training system, there are no detailed regulations on access to continuing training or problems with the validation of this training. This may, however, be no more than a recent guideline document which could be supplemented by future documents.

III.2. Organization of continuing training in the sector

III.2.1. Agreements between the social partners

None of the agreements signed by the social partners in the electricity and electronics sector seem to attach much importance to continuing training.

In Belgium, the collective agreement of the monopoly responsible for electricity generation, distribution and transportation makes no mention of this issue.

Agreements signed by the social partners in this sector in Portugal set out the tasks of enterprise in the area of training in a rather vague way. They emphasise that continuing training is the responsibility of workers themselves. According to these agreements, employees in the sector are obliged to supplement their general and vocational education. For this purpose, they can obtain unpaid leave of up to a maximum of ten days per annum for training, although this leave is available only for school education and not for other types of training. In some very specific cases, moreover, the sectoral agreement obliges workers to compensate the enterprise which has borne the costs of their continuing training if they leave this enterprise at their own initiative.

In Denmark, the collective agreement for the sector also considers that continuing training is a duty of workers. Similarly to Portugal, training does not entitle workers to wage increases or a change of occupational grade. Enterprises can, moreover, compel employees to attend continuing training but this cannot put their jobs at risk.

III.2.2. Initial training

In contrast to Danish labour, Portuguese labour has a low standard of general education. Very few Portuguese workers have attended basic technical training providing access to an initial vocational qualification. Portuguese labour, largely carrying out assembly tasks, has few technical skills. In

proportional terms there are few engineers working in the sector, although their numbers are gradually increasing.

While the low qualification level of labour employed in the sector is a problem connected with the development of the educational sector in Portugal, the Danish education system is of a much higher level and personnel employed in the sector have a much higher training standard.

The continuing training supply does not seem to be offsetting, however, the imbalances in the educational systems of both countries. In contrast to Denmark, the continuing training network in Portugal has not developed to any great extent, with the result that practitioners in the sector have comparatively less access to continuing training in Portugal than in Denmark. The Portuguese continuing training system undoubtedly helps to reinforce inequalities in this area as there is an obvious imbalance between the profile of workers in this sector who have few qualifications and little education and the training supply which is largely targeted on people who have high initial training levels.

III.2.3. Role of the partners in the organization of continuing training

Bearing in mind that Portuguese and Greek legislation continues to place little emphasis on continuing vocational training, State intervention is limited in Portugal and even more limited in Greece. Belgium and Denmark, in contrast, seem to be much more advanced than their counterparts and legislation dates back much further.

Although the electricity and electronics sector in Portugal, as in Denmark, has its own training agencies, the institutional organization of training differs substantially.

Cooperative management of the various training structures by trade unions and employers' representatives is on a firmer footing in Denmark since training is organized around two joint councils which do not exist in Portugal. In Portugal, participation by the social partners in training programmes is not only small-scale but also indirect, since it is limited essentially to the administration of the public institute responsible for implementing vocational training policy.

As regards the role of enterprise, a sort of common model seems to be emerging in Belgium and Denmark. In these two countries, it is compulsory for enterprises to contribute to the funding of publicly organized vocational training. The Belgian situation is more original as in this country financial liability may be shared depending on the general or vocational nature of the training received.

From the point of view of employees, Belgian law seems to be the only law to grant the benefit of training leave to workers. In practice, however, use of this system seems to be somewhat infrequent since workers lack information and enterprises have to follow very complex procedures to recover the proportion of the wage which they lose during training.

III.3. Continuing training practices

III.3.1. Access to continuing vocational training

Although the qualification of the labour force is a constant concern in enterprises in the electricity and electronics sector, there is comparatively little access to continuing vocational training in all the countries except perhaps for Denmark.

In Belgium, for instance, it is estimated that only 3% of employees of the monopoly responsible for generating, distributing and transporting electricity take the opportunity for training leave. In Belgium, as in Greece, access and methods of access to training vary greatly and depend on parameters which differ from one operating site and department to another and on the specific needs of these sites and departments.

The situation is fairly similar in Portugal, where very few workers attend advanced training and retraining courses. This near absence of continuing training reflects the lack of any tradition of use of those training agencies which are available by enterprises in the sector and perhaps also the lack of suitable practices for workers' refresher training, advanced training and retraining in this sector. There is, in any case, a major disparity between what enterprises actually say, i.e. that they have continuing training needs which are above average in comparison with other sectors, and the training practices actually taking place in Portugal.

III.3.2. Conduct of training, validation, careers

In general, collective agreements in the electricity and electronics sector do not take continuing training explicitly into account in career progression.

In Greece, pay rises are not linked to the attendance of training.

The situation seems to be the same in Denmark where enterprises may compel their employees to attend continuing training without any threat to their jobs. In Portugal, the contractual system does not establish any link between training and careers and promotion is based on length of service in the job.

PART II

COMPARING PRACTICES - METHODS

The objective of Part II is to draw conclusions from the international comparisons of Part I and to find out whether any sectoral practices actually exist. Over and above this objective, however, the methodological limits of the approach used here need to be delineated and the foundations laid for a new framework for analysing methods of access to continuing vocational training.

I. What lessons do the comparisons contain?

The international comparisons contain a wealth of information on the general organization of continuing vocational training both nationally and in the various sectors. Leaving aside problems raised by the examination of often very different situations, they clearly highlight undoubtedly far-reaching trends. These comparisons also improve our understanding of the links between social partners and the involvement and role of trade unions and employers' associations in continuing training.

The construction sector seems fairly well organized and could even act as a model for other sectors in some countries such as Spain. The banking and insurance sector also has a well structured training system. However, continuing training seems to be less structured in the electricity and electronics sector and in some service sectors, although some of these are showing sustained and dynamic growth.

There are obviously fairly marked inter-sectoral differences between countries. These are due to some extent to the type of production activity in the sector, generating dissimilar training needs in different countries. National legal frameworks also play a part in this, however, as they assign different entitlements and obligations to the social partners with the result that the organization of continuing training is shaped by their involvement. This factor may have less of an impact in the future, however, as similar measures seem to be taking shape in a certain number of countries such as the compulsory contribution to continuing training by enterprise and the establishment of individual training leave. Continuing training is therefore at a turning point in its history and it would seem that it has become an issue to which legislators are likely to attach much more importance in future years.

Leaving aside the differences that can be seen within each sector of activity, several indices seem to point to the existence of sectoral methods of a transnational type.

In the construction sector, training facilities are often administered jointly or tend to be so, even if this type of organization is not always the rule in the country. This method of management is less evident in banking and insurance since training seems to have more to do with the initiative of employers' organizations than with explicit agreements between the social partners. In the electricity and electronics sector, situations are less comparable and depend more than elsewhere on national legal frameworks and therefore the collective conscience which they reflect. In general, however, the involvement of trade unions and employers' associations in the management of continuing training in this sector is very small-scale and indirect.

Enterprises contribute to the financing of continuing training almost everywhere. Approaches in this area depend to a large extent, however, on national legislation and there does not seem to be a particular sectoral method. In practice, features specific to sectors seem to be more evident in the way in which the funds paid are administered. The construction sector is very significant in this respect as enterprises in several countries directly manage, or claim, with employees, the right to direct management of their contributions to common training funds. In other sectors financing practices are much less innovative and are in some cases even atypical, as in Portugal for instance, where the sectoral agreement makes it compulsory for workers in the electricity and electronics sector to refund, in certain specific cases, the enterprise which has borne the cost of their training. The same is true of the training offered by the Savings Bank Academy in Germany which obliges participants to work for a minimum of three years when they finish training or otherwise refund the cost.

It also seems that the organization and development of training structures are linked to the economic context in which sectors are situated. This is particularly true of the construction sector. Recruitment problems, which appeared at a time when the sector began to pick up again, have undoubtedly led employers' and trade union organizations to take an active part in formulating and implementing training policy, in some cases outside national legal frameworks. The development of continuing training in commerce in Germany and in secretarial work in the United Kingdom is intended to attract and stabilize the work force but has taken place without the participation of union organizations.

In general, trade unions have less representation in service-sector activities than in construction and are rarely involved in the formulation of training

policy. Agreements in this field are in most cases at enterprise and not sectoral level.

As regards access to training, sectoral methods put forward in the past seem to be gaining ground. Although there are real differences depending on the size of the enterprise and the employment status of the work force, there is generally little access to continuing training in the construction sector which seems to conflict in some ways with the degree of organization of this sector. In contrast, the introduction of new technologies has entailed major training needs in the banking, insurance and commercial sectors. There are problems of unequal access in this sector as well, as it is more problematic for women, who account for the majority of the labour force, to attend training, even through they occupy less skilled jobs than men. In the electricity and electronics sector, access is generally limited and there is often a disparity between what enterprises actually say, i.e. that they have major training needs, and their practices.

No model seems to emerge from the comparison as regards validation. Leaving aside a few rare exceptions in the administration and banking sectors, continuing training is not seen as a factor in promotion thereby limiting access to such training in some cases. In less developed countries, the recognition of initial training rather than continuing training seems to be the issue in social dialogue as there is often no link between people's pay levels and their diplomas.

II. Methodological problems of comparison

This interpretation of national situations has some gaps.

In the first instance, problems are raised by the definition of sectors and the fact that the same professions belong to several sectors of activity. This kind of juxtaposition, particularly true of some service-sector trades, obviously raises questions about the advisability of conducting the analysis from the point of view of families of professions and not from a sectoral point of view.

It would also seem desirable to base the international comparisons on detailed and standard information collection grids for all countries and sectors, thereby making it possible to find answers to specific questions relating both to the general framework and particular sub-sets. This approach would avoid the need to ask whether the lack of reference to a particular factor (compulsory funding, existence of the possibility of individual training leave or some other particular legislative provision) is real or a choice by the researcher or intentional or forced by problems in collecting information. In the case of training practices in the sectors, very detailed empirical information is not always available. Simple indicators such as levels of access and numbers of training days per employee and per trainee, calculated by employment status, qualification level or even enterprise size would make it possible, as pointed out in the case of the construction sector, to enhance the international comparisons.

Although statistics of this type make it possible objectively to quantify access to continuing training, they do not increase our understanding of the mechanisms which, within enterprise or at individual level, shape training

decisions and they provide no information on the consequences of training on individuals.

An examination of the practices being used in each country should be based on a detailed and comparable system of monitoring of the various partners. This would make it possible to locate inequalities of access to training, the practical methods by which training is carried out and its added value, over and above the declared aims of the social partners. By focusing on the precise analysis of individual practices in these different fields, the system would undoubtedly provide a unique opportunity to ascertain whether sectoral models exist beyond some common arrangements which have already been ascertained.

To give genuine meaning to these standards, however, analysis should be based on the monitoring of several sectors in each country, as there is little doubt that the approach used to some extent impedes any perception of sectoral developments or even actual training activity at country level since several sectors are never compared with the same national legal framework.

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Gérard Lassibille
Jean-Jacques Paul

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On 20 December 1991, in document SEC (91) 2531, the Commission published the joint opinion on "Methods likely to provide the widest possible genuine access to training". The Centre established a modest research project to look at this issue after hearing the questions raised by the social partners during the various stages of formulation of this opinion.

Using a sectoral approach, it commissioned comparative analyses of:

- construction: comparisons of France/Italy; Spain/Grand Duchy of Luxembourg;
- electrical engineering/electronics: comparisons of Portugal/Denmark; Belgium/Greece;
- office work-administration-commerce-insurance: comparisons of Germany/Netherlands; United Kingdom/Ireland.

The following document illustrates the findings of these comparisons.

Envisaging the question of access to continuing training makes it necessary to raise many questions about initial training, the state of the labour market and public policies and funding.

Similarly, using a particular sector to look at the problem of access to continuing training, while making it possible to channel information, does not mean that this information is limited to the individual problems of the sector. The latter is organized in a significant national, and in particular legislative, context.

The studies envisaged by the Centre in 1991 were of an exploratory type. What outcome can be expected from a comparison of an issue as complex as access to continuing vocational training in the various Member States? How can experimentation in enterprise common to a number of Member States be organized? How can the terms of reference of a comparative study in enterprise be formulated so that the findings are meaningful?

While recognizing the feasibility of the work undertaken, the Centre feels that it is worthwhile to disseminate a synopsis of the works relating to the three sectors and involving the twelve Member States.

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